

# **New standards to address abuse, exploitation and neglect of adults in health and social care services**

**Wednesday 1 August 2018:** New national standards to ensure a consistent approach to reducing and responding to the abuse, exploitation and neglect of adults in health and social care services have been launched today for public consultation by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Mental Health Commission (MHC).

HIQA and the MHC recognise the importance of increasing the quality and safety of services for all adults in Ireland, especially those who may be at risk of harm arising from abuse, exploitation and neglect. Both organisations believe the *Draft national standards for adult safeguarding* will help to actively highlight, minimise and prevent harm.

The term 'safeguarding' in the context of these standards means putting measures in place in services to reduce the risk of harm, to promote people's human rights, health and wellbeing, and empowering people to protect themselves. It is fundamental to high-quality health and social care.

Phelim Quinn, HIQA's Chief Executive, commented: "Arising from our regulation of health and social care services and our involvement in the National Safeguarding Committee, we are working on these standards to ensure adult health and social care services strive to prevent harm arising from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

"People who are receiving care should be treated with dignity and respect and receive care and support in a safe environment that is actively working to protect against and prevent harm. The standards are aimed at ensuring a consistent approach to preventing, stopping and responding to harm as quickly as possible."

Rosemary Smyth, the MHC's Interim Chief Executive, commented: "Any adult may at some point in their life need help to protect themselves from the risk of harm. There may be times when a person is more vulnerable and at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation and they may be unable to adequately protect themselves.

"All adults have a right to be safe and to live a life free from harm. The safeguarding standards published today for public consultation focus on actively highlighting, minimising and preventing a wide range of potential harm and are designed to ensure the appropriate standards are in place for all services so they deliver appropriate care and support to adults, particularly those at risk of harm."

The draft standards are now the focus of a seven-week public consultation, and they have been designed to apply to all health and social care services. Once approved by the Minister for Health, they will become National Standards, placing a responsibility on all publicly-funded health and social care services to begin implementing them.

Both HIQA and MHC are urging the public and interested parties to give their opinion on the draft standards during the public consultation, which will run until 5pm on 19 September 2018. For more information on the standards and the consultation, including how to give us your views, visit [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie) or [www.mhcirl.ie](http://www.mhcirl.ie) or [click here](#).

ENDS.

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## **Notes to the Editor:**

- The *Draft national standards for adult safeguarding* are based on national and international evidence, and were developed with engagement with a diverse range of informed and interested parties, including an advisory group.
- They have been designed to apply to all health and social care services. This includes, but is not limited to: residential services for older people and people with a disability, mental health approved centres, mental health community residences, acute hospitals, day care services, care delivered in the home including care delivered by a public health nurse or home support services, general practices and primary care centres.
- The draft standards are underpinned by these key safeguarding principles:
  - Accountability
  - A rights-based approach
  - Empowerment
  - Partnership
  - Prevention
  - Proportionality.
- An international review of safeguarding in six jurisdictions was conducted by HIQA and the MHC. It identified the benefits of having a national policy for adult safeguarding, specific adult safeguarding legislation, standards clearly reflecting the principles of effective adult safeguarding, and clear, streamlined processes and procedures at local level. The report of the findings of this review was published in May 2018 and is available on [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie) and [www.mhcirl.ie](http://www.mhcirl.ie).
- At the time of writing, HIQA and the MHC had conducted 16 focus groups on the draft standards, with 144 people who both use and provide health and social care services. A number of additional focus groups will be held during the public consultation period.
- In Ireland, adult safeguarding is currently undergoing significant change with a number of key pieces of work in development, including a national policy by the Department of Health. In addition, the Health Service Executive's (HSE's) National Safeguarding Office is currently coordinating feedback on its Draft HSE Adult Safeguarding Policy (2018).
- The National Safeguarding Committee is a multiagency and inter-sectoral body with an independent chairperson. It has an overarching remit of supporting the development of a societal and organisational culture that promotes the rights of people who may be at risk of harm and safeguards them from abuse.

- The objectives of the National Safeguarding Committee's Strategic Plan 2017–2021 include informing and influencing Government policy and legislation to safeguard the rights of people who may be vulnerable.
- One of the Committee's strategic priorities is to influence the development of national standards for the protection of vulnerable adults by HIQA and the MHC. Both HIQA and the MHC are members of the National Safeguarding Committee.